

**AD-A279 584**



NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport R.I.

①

**AMERICA'S MILITARY CRISIS-RESPONSE CAPABILITY:  
IS "ANYTIME-ANYPLACE" A REALISTIC EXPECTATION?**

by

Thomas R. O'Boyle  
Major, USAF

**DTIC**  
**ELECTE**  
**MAY 23 1994**  
**S F D**

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirement of the Department of Operations.

The Contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Departments of the Air Force or Navy.

Signature: Thomas R. O'Boyle

This document has been approved  
for public release and sale; its  
distribution is unlimited.

17 June 1994

Paper directed by  
H.W. Clark, Captain, USN  
Chairman, Joint Military Operations Department

**94-15274**



DTIC QUALITY ASSURED 1

94 5 20 072

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION <b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>		1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS	
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY		3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.	
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE			
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)	
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT	6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) C	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) NAVAL WAR COLLEGE NEWPORT, R.I. 02841		7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)	
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS	
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.
		TASK NO.	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) AMERICA'S MILITARY CRISIS-RESPONSE CAPABILITY: IS "ANYTIME-ANYPLACE" A REALISTIC EXPECTATION? (U)			
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) MAJOR THOMAS R. O'BOYLE, USAF			
13a. TYPE OF REPORT FINAL	13b. TIME COVERED FROM TO	14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 8 FEB 94	15. PAGE COUNT 37
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.			
17. COSATI CODES		18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)	
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	
		SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES; RESPONSIVENESS; PLANNING; INTELL; FLEXIBILITY, ANALYSIS; COMMAND AND CONTROL	
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF ITS FORMER SURROGATES, MAY INCREASE THE NEED FOR AN EFFECTIVE MILITARY DETERRENT TO COMBAT TERRORISM A REVIEW ROGERS RANGERS DURING THE FRENCH & INDIAN WAR (THE FIRST USE OF CRISIS-RESPONSE TYPE FORCES IN "AMERICA") IS USED FOR HISTORICAL REFLECTION. ROGERS INTERDICTED "TERRORISTS" WITH GREAT STRATEGIC SUCCESS. THE KEY TO THEIR OPERATIONAL SUCCESS WAS: THE FLEXIBILITY, SPECIAL TRAINING, PRECISE PLANNING AND EXCELLENT LEADERSHIP.			
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS		21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL CHAIRMAN, OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT		22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 841-3414	22c. OFFICE SYMBOL C

## Abstract of

The Disintegration of the Soviet Union and the disenfranchisement of its former surrogates, may increase the need for an effective military deterrent to combat terrorism. A review of Rogers Rangers during the French & Indian War (the first use of crisis-response type forces in "America" ) is used for historical reflection. Rogers interdicted "terrorists" with great strategic success. The key to their operational success was: the flexibility, special training, precise planning and excellent leadership. A comparison of the Mayaguez Incident in 1975 and the Achille Lauro Hijacking in 1985, is used to chart the direction of U.S. crisis response after Desert One. The Mayaguez, represented an ad hoc approach using theater based forces. The Achille Lauro, represented a relatively mature approach following lessons-learned from Desert One. Both the Mayaguez and Achille Lauro incidents required such a rapid response that positioning a military force (regardless of training or location) proved nearly impossible. Complications include host nations sensitivities, lack of flexible transportation, and the growing sophistication of terrorists. Intelligence remains the key limiting factor. Crisis-response forces must continue to develop fast, flexible transportation, access to timely intelligence and concise detailed planning. The historical window for success is the 5 to 7 day point --not the 48-60 hour window of the Mayaguez or Achille Lauro. U.S. policy should look towards the interdiction of such terrorists as Rogers Rangers did on the American Frontier. Interoperability of such forces within theater command structures remains a problem. A continual, rotational presence from CONUS bases, might overcome such deficiencies. A by-product might provide a theater "inextremis" capability familiar to the responsible CINC. The skills which brought Rogers success 250 years ago are still relevant today.

or	
&l	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ed	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

Dist	Avail and / or Special
A-1	

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	.....	iii
<b>I</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
	The Problem .....	1
<b>II</b>	<b>THE BIRTH OF "AMERICAN" SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
	Summary .....	6
<b>III</b>	<b>THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT</b> .....	<b>7</b>
	Responsiveness .....	7
	Political/Military Decision Making .....	8
	Planning .....	10
	Intelligence .....	11
	Flexibility .....	12
	Command and Control .....	13
	Capability .....	14
	Analysis .....	15
	Summary .....	17
<b>IV</b>	<b>THE ACHILLE LAURO HIJACKING</b> .....	<b>18</b>
	Responsiveness .....	19
	Planning .....	21
	Flexibility .....	22
	Command and Control .....	22
	Final Analysis .....	23
<b>V</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>-- STANDING ORDERS ROGERS' RANGERS</b> .....	<b>A</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>-- LOCATIONS OF MAYAGUEZ AND CREW</b> .....	<b>B</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b>	<b>-- KOH TANG ISLAND ASSAULT</b> .....	<b>C</b>

<b>NOTES</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>32</b>

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Problem. Though one could argue that terrorism is on the wane, compared to the explosive pace set during the 80's, a devil's advocate argument could predict that the disintegration of the Soviet Union will escalate the disenfranchised from conventional political avenues and result in more terrorist incidents. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, as evidenced by the NYC bombing, may be just the tip of the iceberg. In either case, the need for the United States to respond during such incidents to safeguard American citizens, prestige and security around the world is unquestionable. Following the Desert-One debacle, the entirety of American special operations forces -- those normally charged with such responses -- were overhauled, reorganized and re-equipped. Desert One had taught the U.S. many lessons about crisis response using elite forces -- or had it? The purpose of this paper will be to examine in relative detail, two incidents where America was required to respond militarily in a crisis-action mode and in a time sensitive manner. The two chosen case studies, the *S.S. Mayaguez* in 1975 and the Italian cruiseliner the *Achille Lauro* in 1985. The *Mayaguez*, an incident prior to the reorganization or re-birth of our current counter-terrorism capability. The *Achille Lauro*, an incident where one could argue, the U.S. crisis-response/counter-terrorism capability was relatively mature. Two events, 10 years apart and both evenly spaced from Desert One -- an event defining the low point of America's capability to respond to worldwide threats in Operations Other Than War (OOTW).

These two cases will review the path taken by the U.S. during crisis-reaction in OOTW. By analyzing the current operational doctrine employed by the NCA and its respective CINC's/Commanders, it may be possible to determine if the U.S. response is the correct one for dealing with today's changing world. This paper will attempt, as much as possible, to keep the analysis out of the "tactical weeds" and concentrate on the responsiveness, flexibility, command & control, intelligence, and suitability of forces -- all issues a CINC or the NCA may have to consider before conducting such operations. Certainly a more comprehensive analysis of such an

issue would include a review of Desert One in detail, as well as other responses to terrorism like the Israeli raid at Entebbe, the GSG-9 rescue in Mogadishu or the TWA 847 hijacking. A few specifics from these and other cases have been included, but are limited in the interest of time and scope.

The goal is not so much to answer a question, as to provide a framework or reference point to allow a CINC/JCS staffer to ask the right questions, as they review the U.S. approach to terrorism and crisis-response in the post-Cold War world. To appropriately set the stage for this objective, it is necessary to step back in time and revisit the genesis of the "American" response to terrorism. By re-examining these historic principles, a better foundation will be laid for evaluating where the U.S. is today.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BIRTH OF "AMERICAN" SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

The five women hostages were all held together in the same hut. The "terrorists", secure in their camp, had gone to bed carelessly. The early morning was still, the cool mountain air crisp, invigorating. " At three in the morning of 6 Oct, Rogers marched his one hundred and forty-one officers and men to within 1500 yards ... A hushed command: packs were slipped off and stacked, guns loaded ... Slowly, quietly, a thin, long line of dark figures crept to the edge of the clearing ... The surprise was complete."<sup>1</sup>

This was not an excerpt from a Tom Clancy novel nor a Hollywood screen play. The date was 1745. The place, an Indian settlement at St Francis, in French held territory halfway between Albany and Montreal. "Terrorist" is a relatively new word to the English language, though terror and those that spread it, are as acquainted with history as humans themselves. Today we wouldn't describe Indians on the colonial frontier as savages, but to the predominately British settlers no other description would be more apt. They were hired by the French to reap havoc and mayhem. To murder indiscriminately and harass the enemy with lightning raids, savage kidnappings and the holding of hostages. Today we call this state sponsored terrorism. The Indians were in fact little different than the Japanese mercenaries hired by the N. Koreans in the assassination of the S. Korean president or those subsidized by the Soviet Union to destabilize the Mid-East. As Rogers reported in a summary of his exploits at St Francis:

"This Nation of Indians was notoriously attached to the French had for near a Century past, harassed the frontiers of New England, killing people of all ages and sexes in a most barbarous manner...and to my own knowledge in six years time, carried into captivity and killed, on the before mentioned frontiers 400 persons"<sup>2</sup>

A description not unlike one given the Red Brigades, the Shining Path or the Black September terrorist groups today. The U.S. option to combat such terror, would be Delta or SEAL Team Six. In 1745, they called in Robert Rogers and his Rangers.

The raid on the Indian camp at St Francis, virtually wiped out a band of Indians that had terrorized the English colonies in New England (at the behest of the French) during the violent and



bloody French & Indian War. This daring raid deep in enemy country ensured Robert Rogers and his Rangers a place in history<sup>3</sup>. Yet, by this time Rogers and his Rangers' exploits were already famous throughout New England. News of his successes had spread like wildfire, heartening and encouraging a battered people. The effect of this raid was not unlike that bolstering America after the capture of the *Achille Lauro* Hijackers or the return of the crewmen from the *S.S. Mayaguez*. Such triumphs were as hard to come by back then as they are today. Often fraught with dozens of failures for every limited success. In some ways the war against terrorism and its' evil perpetrators have not changed substantially in 250 years.

Rogers Rangers were the genesis, the first unconventional or irregular troops (excluding the native Indians of course) in N. America. Their first charter, was as Rogers himself describes: "Pursuant to special orders from the governor on the Northern and Western frontiers to deter the French & Indians from making inroads upon us that way".<sup>4</sup>

A terrorist deterrent? They unwittingly became the first SWAT team. Rogers Rangers perfected the art of the raid -- stealth, flexibility, special weapons and training. Rogers small unit tactics and operational employments were based on the timeless principles of mobility, security and surprise. Rogers' men attacked up Lake George on ice skates, built special ice shoes, patrolled on snowshoes, carried Tomahawks and wore green felt uniforms . They could move out quickly. They patrolled the lakes, streams and rivers using bateaux boats, canoes and swimmers. They surely would have flown if the birds could have shown them how. They attacked the enemies forts, ships and commerce. They were not orthodox troops. Speed, flexibility, and maneuver were their forte.

Leadership and Command were an essential element of their success. Rogers troops were commanded by Rangers and operated in groups. Commissions weren't granted to gentleman who wished to purchase them (as was the custom then) they were awarded on merit. Rogers' Rangers accomplishments were envied by all. The first troops to be criticized in camp and the first to be asked for in a fight. This was the world of "American" special operations. The risks were high for these types of operations, but so were the payoffs. During one raid on French positions at

Hearts Bay, around Lake George, Rogers' whole force was ambushed (one of the few times) and he returned with only 54 men out of 181.<sup>5</sup> As Rogers remarked about the affair, " We were determined to keep our ground as long as their were two left to stand by each other".<sup>6</sup> A British Captain remarked about the Rangers in 1756:

"But it is impossible to play at bowls without meeting with rubs ... I am certain it is better to die with the reputation of a brave man, fighting for his country in a good cause, than either shamefully running away to preserve ones life or lingerin out an old age, and dying in one's bed without having done his country or his King any service"<sup>7</sup>

So what's important about reviewing this first example of small elite forces utilizing special tactics in a world of 250 years ago? As you look forward, shouldn't you also look back to verify your course? When a football team stumbles or tries to regain its lost glory, the good coaches inevitably return to the fundamentals. What were the fundamentals of those first counter-terrorist troops. What lesson's might be learned from them that are of use to the operational commander in today's world of high tech gadgetry, airpower, and laser-designating "ninja warriors".

These were their fundamentals-- specialized training, the value of leadership, speed, flexibility and maneuver. Their ability at reconnaissance and the value they placed on it themselves, became page one of their charter. As Admiral Sandy Woodward from Falklands fame would describe special operations: "Their every success has been the result of the most meticulous planning, an almost fanatical attention to detail and near total elimination of surprises".<sup>8</sup>

Possibly this mantra was handed down to the British SOF forces (the SAS) from Rogers time. But intelligence was the keystone to operations then just as it is today. Never moving on an enemy with out a careful knowledge of his forces location and disposition "lest he do to you what you are trying to do to him" was indicative of such early principals. In fact Rogers Rangers had a formal list of rules (appendix A) which has as number 17 : "If somebody's trailing you, make a circle, come back on your own tracks and ambush the folks that aim to ambush you"!

The one time that Rogers didn't follow his rules he paid a heavy price (the raid on Hearts Bay). He allowed himself to be pushed to move forward and take action without the proper intelligence or the element of surprise he deemed so critical. As a result from then on, as noted by

a British regular: "The Rangers operated according to precise plans and training. It was not the traditional haphazard high adventure in the field and careless repose in camp".<sup>9</sup>

## **SUMMARY**

The Rangers did in fact learn from past mistakes and modify tactics without losing sight of the fundamentals. Those principles when meshed with energetic, creative and resourceful leadership provided the operational commander with a weapon invaluable to them. They used special tactics and training in: boats, snowshoes, ice shoes, canoes, camouflage. Operational elements like: surprise, command and control, flexibility, precise planning, reconnaissance and self-sustainment all proved critical to these early efforts. Are there lessons to be learned from these earlier days that can be of value to the use of such forces in the future? To answer that question, it necessary to review and analyze two other instances in the use (or attempted use) of American special or elite forces - one before the advent of the post-Desert One revitalization of counter-terrorist forces and one afterwards. The *S.S. Mayaguez* and the *Achille Lauro* are two such incidents.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

"S.S. Mayaguez, a containership, was fired on, boarded & seized by Cambodians on 12 May 1975 - The seizure took place in the Gulf of Thailand".<sup>10</sup>

When this message was received by the NSC at 120930Z, The Mayaguez Crisis was in full bloom. Within three hours, meetings would be held by the President with the NSC. The JCS would meet and order an immediate air recon of the area. Such is the nature of the crisis-reaction business in the later part of the 20th Century. In Rogers's time, news of a massacre or a fort under siege would take days, sometimes weeks. In 1975 it took hours - today almost real time.

While reviewing this case there are questions to consider. What happened during the Mayaguez Crisis and are there lessons which apply to today's world? Could the mistakes that were made have been corrected by organizational changes or operational procedures? What problems did the operational commanders have to deal with in the execution of the strategic action directed from above. In a similar crisis today would the U.S. react differently? Would the CINC have the same options or different ones. Were their similarities between this case and the fundamentals practiced by Rogers Rangers. These are some of the questions that should be taken into consideration while reviewing those three days in May.

#### RESPONSIVENESS

Within hours after the JCS ordered reconnaissance, one of three P-3's, scrambled from various PACOM bases, had located the U.S. registered S.S. *Mayaguez* and her 40 man crew anchored one nautical mile N.E. of Koh Tang Island (KT), where it would stay until towed off by the *USS Holt* following the assault. From 13 - 15 May, the message traffic, phone calls,

briefings and crisis planning teams in Washington, PACOM HQ Hawaii, Marine bases on Okinawa and Cubi Pt, and at the U.S. Support Activities Group (USSAG)/7th AF HQ Utapao, Thailand were moving at hyper speed. Within 60 hours of JCS notification of the seizure, a total of 1000 Marines from Okinawa would be airlifted 2000 nm to Utapao. A Company of 120 Marines from Cubi Point, Philippines, would arrive at Utapao within 9 hr's of the Alert order. Elements of this force would actually begin the assault within 28 hr's of receipt of JCS orders to Utapao<sup>11</sup>. Two USAF helicopter squadrons ( a rescue squadron with air refuelable HH-53's, the other a special ops squadron with CH-53s) would be repositioned to Utapao<sup>12</sup>. Air Force tactical aircraft (F-4s, F-111s, A7Ds and AC-130's) would be alerted all over the theater.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the *USS Holt* would arrive at 2300LCL on 14 May, having steamed full speed from 100nm SSW of Subic after notification and the *USS Wilson* would arrive on scene at 0715LCL, 15 May, having been North of Subic Bay, Philippines. The *USS Coral Sea* would arrive within striking range of KT (100nm off KT) at 0600LCL on 15 May (see Appendix B).

Certainly it is fair to say CINCPAC's forces responded rapidly to the JCS directives to commence operations to rescue the *Mayaguez*. Was it just a rescue operation or were there national strategic and political factors involved? Before analyzing the results of the operational commanders response and any subsequent lessons learned, it is essential to review the strategic nature of this operation. It appears that the operational use of elite or "inextremis" forces, during crisis-reaction in OOTW, are not easily separated from the strategic level of war.

#### POLITICAL/MILITARY DECISION MAKING

When the first call came through to the NSC, it instantly garnered the entire attention of the administration. Why? The scene in the U.S. was not a pretty one. Nixon had resigned just nine months prior. One White House aide describes, "The world was in general political disarray and the apparent decline of the U.S. was raising serious questions in capitals throughout the world as to its ability to continue to play a positive role in international affairs".<sup>14</sup> In May 1975, President Ford was truly under the gun. As he reflected after the incident, " My feeling was that seizure of a

US vessel and crew, especially by a country that had so recently humiliated us was a very serious matter".<sup>15</sup> Certainly, on the top of every American policy makers mind was the effect of the fall of the S. Vietnamese government one month earlier. The Khmer Rouge was not exactly well thought of in the international community. They had killed roughly 600,000 people in the first 6 months -- out of a total population of 7 million (that would be the equivalent of 22 million dead in the US at the time). The Cambodians had clearly been looking for a fight -- just like Poncho Via, the Barbary Pirates, the Iranians, the PLO or any of the other numerous terrorists groups or outlaw nations the U.S. has come into conflict with during its history. In this case, Phnom Penh had tried to extend their territorial waters out to 90 nm, versus the internationally recognized three-mile limit. Before 12 May 1975 the Cambodians had taken the following actions:

- Seized Thai fishing boats, which they released on 2 May 75
- Fired on a S. Korean ship and tried to board it - 4 May 75
- Seized a Vietnamese craft on 6 May 75
- Detained a Panamanian ship for 36 hours on 7 May 75

President Ford had given CINCPAC a sense of urgency (if he didn't already have one) when he quickly called an NSC meeting and emphasized that time was of the essence.<sup>16</sup> Why did the President feel this way? Aside from the reasons mentioned above, the image of the *USS Pueblo* was fresh on everyone's mind. A lack of resolve to take immediate action, it was felt, sealed the fate of those crewmen. It had portrayed the U.S. as a paper tiger in the eyes of many. The transfer of the crewmen to the mainland (which was the main fear ) would, as in the *Pueblo* incident, make it almost impossible to mount a rescue attempt. While forgetting lessons learned is the most common of criticisms, this is a case where remembering a lesson learned became a central decision making factor by those involved. President Ford was also concerned with the American confidence in the Presidency and Congress's attempts to seize Presidential authority through the Jackson-Vanik amendment (cutting off aid to Turkey and the investigation of America's Intel activities). Kissenger argued it was far beyond the question of seizure of a U.S. civilian vessel

and more to the question of international perception of power and national will. Politics certainly drove the Mayaguez. It was determined that :

- Military action was necessary
- No use of US forces on the mainland could be accepted
- There was no diplomatic option due to isolation of the Cambodians
- Show of force option would produce no tangible results due to perceived weakness of US forces after fall of S. Vietnam
- The Pueblo analogy

Such was the situation the planners were left with.

## PLANNING

For these reasons the US decided to act. Planning was done at both the NSC and JCS (as well as in the theater) to determine options. It was at this point where the political involvement in the military options began to surface. Initially, because of deference to host nation sensitivities, US forces in Thailand were not to be used. Here is an issue that continually surfaces during crisis response planning in OOTW: French overflight and use of UK based bombers in the Libya raid, UAE basing rights in Desert One, and Algerian authorization in TWA 847, to name a few. Later, after acknowledging there were no other alternatives, this decision was reversed to allow the use of Thai based, U.S. fixed-wing aircraft and helo's.

After the first NSC meeting the commanders intent was written. The operation was to center on both the rescue of the crew and a show of force. Five courses of action were created:

- A diplomatic initiative to the Cambodians through the Chinese
- A punitive strike upon the Cambodian mainland using the USS Coral Sea
- Movement of an Amphibious task force to position for an assault and rescue attempt at Koh Tang Island
- A Helicopter assault upon the ship
- A B-52 strike upon the mainland

Of these five options, all but the B-52 strike was moved along in the planning process and eventually utilized to one form or another. In subsequent NSC meetings, the President was

determined to show an overwhelming use of force. "President Ford was concerned that once the decision was made to use force, that it be sufficient to assure the military success of the operation -- He felt a strong personal desire not to error on the side of too little force."<sup>17</sup>

CINCPAC Admiral Gayler, got the order to execute an amphibious assault against Koh Tang Island and near simultaneous storming of the *Mayaguez* (see Appendix C). He was also directed to prepare to strike the mainland port facilities at Kompong Son and Ream airfield. Nearly 1120 Marines had been moved to Utapao, Royal Thai AFB to link up with 12 USAF helo's. Three helos were to off load a company of Marines onto the *USS Holt*, who would then move along side the *Mayaguez* and board her.<sup>18</sup> The eight other helos, with 175 Marines, were to conduct an assault on KT, one 1/2 hours later. The *Coral Sea* was directed to plan for a three wave attack against the mainland to begin at approximately 0745 (the time originally thought necessary to secure the crew members thought to be on board the island). Such was the Plan.

### INTELLIGENCE

The CINC was backed into a corner and as was said afterward: "There was little possibility of strategic warning in the case of the *Mayaguez*"<sup>19</sup> Intel had been continuously trying to up date the picture. The "fog of war" was alive and well. The assault force at Utapao had been told to expect 13-18 irregulars guarding the 40 crewmen on KT island. The ship was said to be dead in the water. Initial Intel reports from the P-3 had shown the *Mayaguez*, under Cambodian escort, heading towards the mainland. By approximating the steaming time and direction, the P-3 put the *Mayaguez* in port by sunrise on the 15th (accounting for the original sense of urgency and the timeline)<sup>20</sup>. The continuous air-recon ordered by CINCPAC could not pinpoint the location of the crew. The empty vessel was finally located at anchor and apparently abandoned one nm NW of KT. It was assumed that the crew was on the island. An Army U-21 would fly over the island (with the Marine assault commander on board) but had to stay at 6,000 feet due to automatic weapons fire. A Spectre AC-130 would count 50 campfires the night before the assault and as a participant would recount: "For Christ' sake, the Spectre had flown overhead the island twice, on



the 13th and 14th, and counted 50 campfires. Assuming that each little gomer would share a fire with just one other, that means there were at least 100 people on the island".<sup>21</sup> Needless to say, the Intel was inaccurate - at least that given to the assault force. The DIA and CIA estimates given to the NSC, JCS and even the CINC were surprisingly accurate. They indicated there were 150 to 200 Cambodian troops with heavy weapons on the island. How this escaped transmission to the assault force has been lost in time - but not forgotten. Col Gary Weikel, the co-pilot of one of the HH-53s in the first wave remarked:

"Yeah, I was surprised, I was surprised 15-20 little gomers with WW-II rifles could put up such a solid shit screen of heavy weapons fire and shoot down five of the 8 helo's we sent in on the first wave. Needless say many people questioned our planning. Suffice to say we would have had a different plan if everyone hadn't continued to verify the flawed intel picture we'd been given." <sup>22</sup>

At least the President had been correctly briefed. As of 12 May, the DIA had estimated that 200 troops with heavy weapons were in KT.<sup>23</sup> As Major Bud MacFarlane, military aide to the President, noted:

"Similarly, the procedures of the PAC Command did not assure distribution to subordinate units of all critical intelligence material with the result that the estimate of the enemy strength which had been developed by DIA and Pacific Command Intel staff never did reach Marine ground assault commanders and PACOM didn't know this"<sup>24</sup>

But Intel or not, the question was -- could the operation rescue a crew they didn't even know the whereabouts of ?

### FLEXIBILITY

Marines and Air Force helicopters married up at Utapao, Navy ships steamed into position and at 1845 on 14 May, the JCS gave the execute order. At 0550, 68 Marines are inserted onto the USS Holt by 3 HH-53s. By 0725 the *Holt* had pulled alongside and the Marines boarded the *Mayaguez*. By 0835 the ship was secure. Nearly simultaneous to the off load of Marines on to the *Holt*, eight CH and HH-53s, carrying 180 troops, assaulted KT attempting to put forces in both a Western and Eastern landing zone simultaneously.<sup>25</sup> Insertion of additional forces would take 4 hours (the time needed to recycle to Utapao to pick up additional Marines) due to lack of helos.

The lack of helos would also be a major finding by the Holloway Commission which investigated Desert One (unlike Desert One however, some of these helos were air refuelable).<sup>26</sup>

Before 33 Marines were landed on the beach 11 of the 12 helos were severally damaged. Within 90 minutes, eight helos had been shot down or had to abort with severe damage. Despite the Marines remaining on the island for 14 hours, all 18 of the Marines killed in the operation would be killed in this first 90 minute period.<sup>27</sup>

The crew was recovered by the *Holt* (at about 1000) from a Thai fishing vessel they had been released to at sunrise (unbeknownst to anyone). The battle for control of the island stabilized by noon and the JCS ordered (not the CINC mind you) the extraction of the Marines. By 1800, five helos, took six loads off the island (sustaining major damage to three of them) and by 2010, the last four flyable helos removed the remaining troops from the Island. A total of 230 troops had been inserted and extracted at a cost of 18 KIA, 3 MIA and 49 wounded.<sup>28</sup> During the initial assault the operation resembled a special ops effort; the helo's had gone in -- hoping for surprise, without any preparation of the landing zone by either Naval gunfire support or TACAIR. By the end, the operation resembled WW II. Despite 260 TACAIR sorties (between 13-15 May), by virtually every type of aircraft in the US inventory, not one bomb was dropped to prep the LZ.<sup>29</sup> The first TACAIR didn't arrive until 1600 (because of lack of intel on the location of the crew, any TACAIR support prior to 1000 would have been questionable). Once the crew was located, over 107 sorties were flown, with 66 sorties dropping ordnance including the 15,000lb Blu-82<sup>30</sup>.

While all of this was taking place, the *Coral Sea* had steamed into the area and launched three waves against the mainland. The first wave, was ordered not to drop only minutes before reaching their targets. Confusing signals coming from the Cambodians via a radio address had caused the NSC to pause. Moments later, however, President Ford concluded the radio appeal was a ruse and ordered the other two waves to drop as planned -- which they successfully did.

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

As it turned out, the NCA, JCS, CINCPAC, and USSAG/7thAF CC all participated (at one time or another) as the operational commander. There were never any clear or articulated command lines. During this incident, the U.S. had moved forward from the Vietnam model (the President picking out bombing targets), but was still far from the post-Goldwater/Nichols model of the CINC being the sole operational commander. CINCPAC had ordered the helos to deposit the Marines on the *Holt* rather than assaulting the *Mayaguez* directly (as planned by the JCS).<sup>31</sup> The President ordered the first wave not to drop on their targets. The JCS ordered the evacuation of the island. The USSAG/CC ordered the majority of the supporting TACAIR sorties.

Surely it is "Major" Bud MacFarlane (USMC ret) -- not the NSC advisor, offering this analysis: "Another shortcoming of organizational procedures involved the ad hoc integration of units for the assault on Koh Tang. Such operations require an extremely well trained air ground team like the Marine Corps".<sup>32</sup> But, the Joint Special Operations Command didn't yet exist and there was no Marine air available or deployable enough to make the time line.

The operational control was apparently as fragmented and confused as the tactical control. Col Weikel's recollection of the tactical picture seems reflective of the command and control at all levels during the *Mayaguez* Crisis:

The TACAIR support was ridiculous, dangerous and a joke. The aircraft couldn't hit a thing even when the OV-10 Fac marked for them. In fact had it not been for the resourceful and determination of Major Bob Udendorf (the wing stanEval pilot who listened to the confusion on the radio in the command post at Utapao, and became so frustrated that he had his OV-10 fueled and loaded by his own orders and flew down to Koh Tang and took charge of the gaggle) whose on scene seizure of command and his personal direction of the TACAIR support we would surely have been doomed. In fact the TACAIR was so bad that he sent everyone but the Spectre home and did most of the supporting fire himself with rockets and guns.<sup>33</sup>

## CAPABILITY

Marines were moved from Okinawa and the Philippines. The helo's and TACAIR came from Thailand. The nearest ships were rerouted. B-52's were alerted on Guam. The CINC and the JCS (both serving as the operational commander) had utilized nearly every available force in theater. Why did the CINC settle on the ad hoc team used. Why didn't he consider using special

operations forces available to him. There was a SEAL team at Subic located with the Marines. There was also an SF battalion in theater. Would the use of these forces, in a strategic recon roll, have verified the presence of more enemy troops on the island or the location of the crew? As Adm Sandy Woodward would be advised in the Falklands, "Reconnaissance is never wasted".<sup>34</sup> Was this viewed as a conventional operation well suited to Marine Corp Doctrine. It was an amphibious operations or was it? Though this is not a discussion about force planning, it is interesting to note that the Navy criticized the USAF helos, yet it was the flexibility of the USAF aircraft that actually prevented a disaster.<sup>35</sup> Did the CINC just go to the nearest force available? One of the first operational orders the CINC had given was the deployment of 29 AF security policeman from Korat, Thailand to Utapao. Apparently, he felt this was his only immediate or "in extremis" capability. Regardless, it was actually the NSC (in concert with the JCS) which selected the forces. To answer a few of these questions we can go to the NSC's review of the incident. As Head writes: "The critical logistical factor was the number of helicopters that could be flown to Utapao"<sup>36</sup> Or, as was also stated: "The most critical aspect to the JCS (during a review of the feasibility of the Op plan) was the question of whether the diverse and widely separated forces would come together in time to conduct an effective combined arms operation"<sup>37</sup> The results would suggest that they failed.<sup>38</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Within 14 hours the operation was over. What were the lessons learned. Were the proper forces used. Were they supported or more importantly, was the logistical capability to accomplish such a quick reaction effort available to the CINC. Did the necessary forces even exist? Was the command system adequate?

The operational commanders didn't appear to be biased against special ops forces, as Swartzkopf was initially in Desert Storm.<sup>39</sup> The President had decided to error on the side of more force - this issue alone may have driven the Marine option. The U.S. military did not have a force postured, trained or equipped for this type of scenario. Neither theater SOF forces nor the

Marines were specifically trained for the type of short notice mission conducted. Adm Woodward of Falklands fame once remarked, "the U.S. military always tended to smash right through the front door, a technique that has brought them some success".<sup>40</sup> Yet, the question is, did reliance on that principle prevent the development of crisis reaction forces for use in the OOTW spectrum? As would be reported after Desert One: "The Holloway Commission had concluded that the Iran rescue mission had failed because the U.S. military forces lack an effective capability to respond to terrorist attacks".<sup>41</sup> Another critic of Desert One said, "Historically, since before WWII, this is precisely the type of operation at which the Armed Forces of the U.S. have not performed at the best".<sup>42</sup>

The PACAF report and the Navy report fault the Intel distribution and the command & control arrangement. In this operation an ad hoc organization was created without a central command. It required unorthodox interservice arrangements and thus the Marines were transported to the beach by AF helo's supported by AF air, while the Navy hit the mainland. As the decision makers reflected: "Further- if the NSC members had known of other military options at hand their decision would have been different".<sup>43</sup> What about the political influence in creating the COA's and its effect on the operational/implementation by the CINC. Head says:

The political success of crisis actions requires that the president not only make the final decisions but monitor operational implementation to control the use of force. The tactical success of operational implementation is extraordinarily dependent upon intel infor, communication, organizational procedures and the presence of an operational military combined arms team".<sup>44</sup>

This operation seemed to have none of these and suffered as a result.

Intel was the major problem. Had there been a more qualified force available, possibly in the U.S., could it have been utilized more effectively? Within 60 hr's it could have been flown to Utapao, but the lack of Intel may still have prevented its effective use. As Head's analysis said: "A major reason for the large Marine and AF casualties in the assault on KT was the presence of an enemy force much larger than predicted".<sup>45</sup>

## **SUMMARY**

The U.S. was in the same situation as the British before Rogers Rangers. There was no force trained for the mission required. The ad hoc result was a near disaster. Only the flexibility and mass of the forces themselves prevented it. Flexibility and training allowed Rogers to conquer the enemy and the elements. Speed was important, but not as important as thorough planning and adequate Intel. Rogers had found out the hard way at Hearts Bay. Lack of Intel could defeat even a specially trained force. A streamlined command and control system might have insured proper Intel flow. The fog of war is ever present, especially in Operations Other Than War. According to the Chairman, General George S. Brown:

"The success of the unique operation to recover the SS *Mayaguez* and her crew by the combined efforts of the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps represents an outstanding display of versatility, dedication and professional competence of all participants..."<sup>46</sup>

The *Mayaguez* was truly a joint, though ad hoc operation. Successful only because of luck and the operations wider goals. Would a truly joint, streamlined team have had a better chance? Maybe the case of the *Achille Lauro* can provide a clue.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ACHILLE LAURO HIJACKING

It had been nearly 10 years since the "hijacking" of the *Mayaguez*. Conditions in the world had changed considerably in some respects. The US had re-asserted itself and its intentions to play a part in the world by use of military actions if necessary (such as Grenada) and through an engaging foreign policy aimed at keeping the Western Alliance solid in the face of pressure from the Soviet Union (like basing Pershing II missiles in Europe). The Soviets, had of course fought back. They had supplied financial backing to numerous terrorists group in hopes of undermining the Arab-Israeli peace initiatives and destabilizing the Third World by supplying military advisors equipment and training to any group that might oppose Western sponsored democracies. Recently, the transfer of over \$50 million to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua (through Bulgaria) has reaffirmed this Soviet involvement.<sup>47</sup>

Into this chaotic Cold War battle, sailed the Italian Cruiseline *Achille Lauro*, plying her trade of taking passengers on scenic cruises along the historic Mediterranean. At around 1:00 pm the ship departed Alexandria, Egypt enroute to Israel. All but 97 of the 750 passengers had left the ship for a tour of the Pyramids and the Sinai, planning to link back up with the ship in Israel the next day.<sup>48</sup> Unbeknownst to the 97 passengers and 350 crewmen, departing from Alexandria that afternoon, were also four terrorists from the Palestinian Liberation Front ( a splinter group of the PLO headed by Abu Abbas )<sup>49</sup>. Their plan centered around seizing the ship in Israel, creating a crisis in the Arab-Israeli talks, and bartering for the release of 50 PLO/terrorists held in Israeli prisons (19 of which were reportedly members of an elite PLO commando unit called Force-17).<sup>50</sup> The plan had gone smooth enough, with the terrorists smuggling their weapons-laden baggage into their cabin just as the ship departed port. But, just as in war, "fog" is also ever present in OOTW. While the terrorists were cleaning and assembling their weapons, a hapless steward stumbled into their cabin, forcing the terrorists off their "best laid plans" and into premature action.

Much like in the TWA 847 incident, the passengers were sorted by passport /religion and the Americans singled out.<sup>51</sup> Demands were made to Egyptian authorities at Port Said, on Monday evening, while crisis-action planning began in earnest in Europe and the U.S. So, 10 years after the *Mayaguez* and only a few months after TWA 847, the U.S. was faced with an incident that seemed to be a collage of the two. A hijacking of a ship on the high seas, demands for their release, no effective government to deal with in diplomatic channels and imminent danger to the passengers and crew anticipated. Confused with fragmentary Intel on the number of hijackers on board, the number of weapons, and their intent, the crisis was also muddled in the haze of international sensitivities fearful both, of dealing with terrorists or appeasing them.

After the demands were made, the ship, (much like the pattern of the TWA 847 incident) was ordered to sail to Syria. Like the *Mayaguez*, it disappeared from sight until Tuesday afternoon 8 October, when it appeared off the coast of Tartus, Syria. Threats were made to the Syrian officials regarding the killing of passengers if their demands were not immediately met. Their determination was vividly recorded from the radio transcripts, "We will start executing at 3:00pm sharp"; "5 more minutes"; "We cannot wait any longer we will start killing".<sup>52</sup>

Once again following the familiar pattern of the TWA 847 incident, a hostage was brutally murdered (in this case the wheelchair bound Leon Klinghoffer rather than the bound Navy SEAL Robert Stetham from TWA 847) to emphasize the desperate nature of their plight and the imminent threat of a wholesale slaughter of innocent hostages. Clearly action was called for in the event such threats were realized.

### RESPONSIVENESS

Within 7 hours of the start of the Hijacking the Reagan Administration's crisis response team (the Operations Sub Group) charged with dealing with terrorist incidents and comprising members from most of the government agencies one might expect i.e. FBI, CIA, DIA, OSD, State, NSC etc., met to discuss options. Noel Koch, the Deputy Asst Sec of Defense, responsible for terrorist incidents, interrupted debate to immediately request the movement of the



Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) forces to deploy from their stateside bases and to prepare as Koch would say, "Take that sucker down". In light of the TWA 847 dilemma (where the crisis suffered 17 days of "circus like" T.V. and the President was labeled "Jimmy Reagan" ) the administration wanted to get tough and end this thing decisively.<sup>53</sup> But the parallels to TWA 847 were everywhere.

During TWA 847, the emergency response team (EST) comprised of 20 personnel from State, JSOC and various other agencies, took twice as long as advertised to depart. JSOC departed their N.C. base, almost 24 hr's after the crisis had begun -- about the same time Stetham's body was being dumped on the ramp in Beirut.<sup>54</sup> During the *Achille Lauro* incident, the EST took off 12 hr's after the Hijacking. JSOC's 500 men under the command of BGen Carl Stiner (including elements of both Delta's ground commandos and their "waterbreathing" compatriots, SEAL Team Six) again had trouble departing the U.S., getting airborne Tuesday afternoon -- 24 hr's after the crisis began and about the same time that Leon Klinghoffer's body was being dumped into the Mediterranean waters off Syria.<sup>55</sup> JSOC apparently had trouble loading and unloading, as well as experiencing the breakdown of a couple of their C-5 cargo aircraft.<sup>56</sup>

Frustrated by the lack of deployability, Adm Holloway, in charge of the Bush Commission on Terrorism (formed by President Reagan after the TWA 847 affair to review and direct the government's response to terrorism) and the former head of the Desert One investigation, stated he'd been appalled at how long it took JSOC to get moving on the *Achille Lauro*. At one point saying to Stiner, "If you can't improve your deployability, lets get rid of the whole damn outfit".<sup>57</sup> Terrel Arnold, a Bush Commission staffer, wrote about the seemingly unconscious delay in JSOC deployability during a crisis: "There appears to be the need to make a host of last minute decisions about team composition, weapons, dress, communications and related issues and then rehearse the team in coping with detailed aspects of the specific incident".<sup>58</sup> A very similar issue confronted the SOF personnel during Desert One.<sup>59</sup>

## THE PLANNING

Regardless of the delay, the administration had reviewed the incident and realized from the very beginning that a military effort might be required should they start killing the hostages. Similar to the conditions which confronted President Ford, another Republican President had been faced with a dilemma:

- TWA 847 - Hostages had been moved to Beirut negating rescue efforts
- No diplomatic effort with a legitimate government seemed possible
- Allies skittish on supporting military efforts (like Thais had been)
- The ship was in international waters

Like the *Mayaguez*, lack of U.S. warships in the immediate vicinity of the incident complicated the planning. Part of Stiner's force would deploy to the UK base at Akotiri, Cyprus and the rest would move to the Italian base at Sigonella. Like TWA 847, where JSOC had basically 3 options: storming the plane in Beirut, storming it in Algiers or attacking the terrorists on the ground; JSOC had 3 options for the *Achille Lauro* -- storming the ship in Beirut (if it went there), storming the ship in Egypt or storming the ship on the high seas. Once again, a very similar set of options to TWA 847. Anyone of the three options required an LHA to serve as a platform for the blackhawk helicopters (being flown from the States) to operate from. The only available LHA was days away in the N. E. Med on a NATO exercise. This, together with the deployment delay had also complicated the options by insuring that the earliest forces could be assembled, the helos built up and the ships moved into position was Wednesday afternoon. But, by Wednesday afternoon about 5:00pm, just as the SEALs were finally over-the-horizon on three American warships and in position -- the drama was over.

Just as the hijackers had begun to shoot their second passenger (an American woman), they had been contacted by Abu Abbas, the PLF's commander and mastermind of the operation. He told them by a radio broadcast, not to harm the hostages and return to Egypt. During this period, just like the previous day, the ship vanished from U.S. observations. It was only through report of an Israeli patrol boat that the *Achille Lauro*, was again located Wednesday afternoon. The ship

had returned to Port Said. The hijackers surrendered after a flurry of diplomatic activity and a decision by the Egyptians to allow the hijackers to flee under the caveat there had been no violent acts committed on board. The death of Klinghoffer would be officially denied by both Egyptian and Italian authorities until after the deal was made.

### FLEXIBILITY

The final phase of the US involvement with the *Achille Lauro* was the most dramatic. Having been told to stand down from a rescue attempt, Stiner's JSOC forces on Akotiri were packing up to re-deploy home when alerted by the NSC to standby. The NSC, (effectively exercising operational control of the operation) had ordered the *Saratoga*, thru EUCOM command channels, to prepare to intercept an Egypt Air aircraft, flying the terrorists to Algeria. Similarly, it had ordered JSOC through separate channels, to attempt to capture the hijackers after the Navy had forced them down on the joint Italian-American airbase at Sigonella.

### COMMAND AND CONTROL

Like the *Mayaguez*, command and control was not streamlined. EUCOM and JSOC had been at each others throats over command & control since the Dozier kidnapping which had been heightened during the TWA 847 crisis. A major jurisdictional dispute between EUCOM and JSOC continued to fester. As Noel Koch said, "the JSOC and European Command had never worked out their jurisdictional dispute".<sup>60</sup> In fact EUCOM even had trouble with some of JSOC's predecessor's. After the Marine barracks bombing, the new Deputy EUCOM commander had thrown the ISA (Intelligence Support Activity) out of theater. He commented that there had been 31 different "stovepiped" command channels during the affair. During TWA 847, the Terrorist Incident Working Group (which later became the OSG) had recommended the immediate deployment of JSOC. But the Pentagon, in light of the EUCOM reservations from previous incidents, said no. They wanted integrity of command.<sup>61</sup> But integrity of command or not, the *Achille Lauro* intercept operation was on. Like the *Mayaguez*, one headquarters would control the

air portion (EUCOM) and one, the ground portions (JSOC). The overall commander being the NSC. The intercept went well due entirely to the professionalism and competence of the *Saratoga's* crew. Stiner's C-141 actually landed at Sigonella shortly before the Egypt Air aircraft was forced down and JSOC surrounded the aircraft.<sup>62</sup> But the "fog of war" was ever present -- this time in the form of the Italians.

Not having "unity of command" themselves and without anyone in charge of the entire operation, the local Italians had gotten wind of the intercept (by the EUCOM base commander) and surrounded the JSOC troops. The ensuing "Mexican standoff" eventually resulted in the transfer of the terrorists to Rome by the Italians and the subsequent release and escape of the mastermind Abu Abbas. The hijackers were brought to justice and the whole incident, like the *Mayaguez*, was declared a major victory and that was that.

#### FINAL ANALYSIS

Unfortunately these two incidents and the numerous others mentioned, highlight a disturbing trend in crisis-reaction situations. Like Rogers Rangers on the frontier, who were organized to combat a threat which was unassailable by conventional forces, JSOC was thrown together after Desert One to give the United States a capability to combat such crisis. Though special operations forces have been present in one form or another throughout U.S. history, one could argue that not since the days of Rogers, have they been specifically targeted towards preventing terror attacks against terrorists in a concerted or organized fashion. Desert One was responsible for the birth of the current U.S. special operations forces. The Holloway Commission (established to investigate Desert One) concluded that: "The Iran rescue mission had failed because U.S. military forces lack an effective capability to response to terrorist attacks".<sup>63</sup>

The result, was a robust force structure with a single command line run through JSOC, with forces ready to deploy worldwide, on a moments notice. One could assume, that had JSOC been available, they would have been used on the *Mayaguez* -- or would they? The fact remains that the *Mayaguez* and the *Achille Lauro*, were two crisis-actions requiring almost immediate

response to prevent the possible loss of hostages or destruction of national strategy goals. Certainly politics played a driving factor in both. TWA 847 had exacerbated the need to retaliate during the *Achille Lauro*, the way the fall of Saigon and evacuation of Phnom Penh had the *Mayaguez*. Prestige was on the line as well as the lives of hostages. But what could the U.S. do? In the *Mayaguez* operation, the assault to rescue the crew was conducted 60 hours after the incident began. In the Achille Lauro Hijacking, JSOC was in place ready to conduct operations slightly more the 48 hours. Considering the difference in flying times for the Pacific, one could assume, had JSOC been around in 1975, they could have conducted the *Mayaguez* operation within 60 hours. Yet, in both cases the window had already evaporated by the time the forces could be deployed. The time to get the *Mayaguez* was while she still had the crew on board (roughly the 48 hours point) and the time to catch the *Achille Lauro* was around 24 hours. With experienced terrorist groups this short time span may be the limit we can expect. As Noel Koch wrote: "With the GSG-9 in Mogadishu, Israel at Entebbe and the Italians with Dozier -- terrorists would move to 'conclusive incidents' i.e. bombings -- where nobody could react".<sup>64</sup> Responding to this thesis an administration official was heard to remark that such an idea was tantamount to murder. The GSG-9 raid in Mogadishu in 1977, took place 5 days after the hijacking, during which the pilot was murdered by terrorists (he was thrown on the ramp afterward, like TWA 847) and the 86 hostages rescued.<sup>65</sup> The Israeli raid at Entebbe concluded 7 days after the initial hijacking.<sup>66</sup>

The hypothesis of this paper was, that the time required to act is so short that the transportation assets and the "shooters" should both be permanently based in the CINC's theater. Theorizing that had an element of Delta been located with the special ops air assets already stationed in Europe, CINCEUCOM (unlike CINCPAC in the *Mayaguez*) would have had the force in place to conduct operations against the *Achille Lauro*. This seemed conclusive. On review however, had Delta been collocated with the air assets based in England, they would have saved less than 8 hours -- not enough time to make the difference alone. The limiting factor in both cases involved the movement/locating of ships at sea.

Intel was the definitive problem in both cases. Despite the sophistication of the Intel community, finding a ship at sea can be a lengthy and difficult operation. During the *Mayaguez*, the Navy P-3 was finally able to locate the ship, but the vital information about the number of troops on the island was left in Washington and the Operational HQ at PACOM. It was never passed to the assault team. During the *Achille Lauro*, the location of the ship and the tail number of the aircraft to intercept, came only through a third country. At least, on the *Achille Lauro*, that info was correctly passed to the operational units. As was learned in the Pueblo Incident or TWA 847, once the hostages leave their ship, locating them can be as difficult as finding a ship at sea.

A word about the command chain. Another hypothesis of this paper was the need to permanently beddown JSOC forces throughout the theaters, exercised and operated under the control of the CINC's. Conversely, the evidence suggests the possible need for a continual rotating exercise/inextremis capable presence, but not a permanent one. Even during the *Mayaguez*, where in-theater forces were used, Intel was the limiting factor. During the *Achille Lauro* and TWA 847, even a theater-based force would require tremendous luck to be in the right place, at the right time, with host country approval. Unity of command, will always be an issue in such operations because, like cops to a crime scene, the need to get there fast with all available assets will always complicate the command picture. A CINC's unfamiliarity with JSOC would probably have prevented the short notice divert and subsequent arrival in Sicily. The JSOC commander was certainly not in a position to track the *Saratoga* and order her to intercept the Egyptian airliner in an expeditious fashion. Neither of the players would have been in a position to digest the sensitive Intel which was the light bulb for the original concept of operations. Surely EUCOM's sensitivity to his position (relative to relations with the Italian government in the future) might have inhibited the expeditious action taken by BGen Stiner to surround the aircraft or following the departing Italian aircraft to Rome. This is evidenced by the overwhelming desire of the local US Navy base commander to notify his Italian counterpart of the operation -- the sole incident which spoiled the NSC plan. During the *Mayaguez*, concern for Thai sensitivities initially prevented the use of the local air assets which would have made the operation impossible.

While Rogers' Rangers utilized special training and equipment to provide operational capability, modern day SOF forces also require similar innovation. Without the air refueling of the HH-53s, the operation would have certainly turned into a disaster. Air refuelable helos provided flexibility during the *Mayaguez* and could have during the *Achille Lauro*.<sup>67</sup> When the decision making process and reliability of intel is suspect, time is of the essence. Like the flexibility exhibited by Rogers' men -- who were able to transition from snowshoes to ice skates to bateaux boats or canoes -- fast, flexible transportation is an absolutely vital tool for crisis operations.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The improvements made in special operations forces and concepts since the days of the *Mayaguez*, are as quantum a leap as the formation of Rogers Rangers was in 1745. Such forces have been proven necessary throughout U.S. history. An ad hoc approach is threatened with failure from the beginning. Flexibility of force both in equipment, training and tactics are as valid today as they were 250 years ago. Centralized command and control in OOTW is difficult, but the closer the U.S. moves to the *Achille Lauro* concept and the farther away from the *Mayaguez* one, the more effective a U.S. response may be. Neither JSOC, nor theater CINC, will be able to operate independently from one another. Anything which enhances their interoperability, will enhance U.S. crisis-response capability and provide a better terrorist deterrent.

Noel Koch had emphasized the need to get terrorists before they act. Terrorists had adapted and become sophisticated. Like the Indian raids on the colonial frontiers or Rogers' raid on the "terrorist" Indian camp at St Francis, Koch was offering that the only way to effectively stamp out such a sophisticated threat was by interdiction. Call it murder like one administration official or call it saving lives. Interdiction may be a policy worthy of further consideration.

Short of acting offensively against terrorists as a matter of policy, there is very little a CINC can do to effectively plan for such "inextremis" efforts in his theater. The window has become so narrow and the circumstances so rare, that if stateside assets can't get there, the Intel probably isn't good enough to operate. Basing counter-terrorists assets in the theater would hardly increase the probability of success at an affordable level. The resultant cost in basing such forces overseas and the inherent strain on allies (like the Italians who wouldn't willingly cooperate even though the murder had taken place on their ship) simply isn't justified. A more judicious approach might maintain a temporary presence, benefiting from the training, familiarization and interoperability within a CINC's theater. Such a presence, might have the residual benefit of having the right forces in place for those rare occurrences, where of luck provides an opportunity.



## APPENDIX A

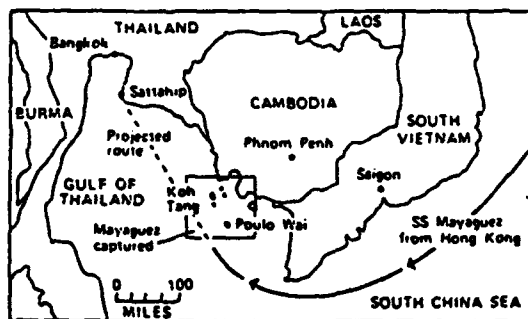
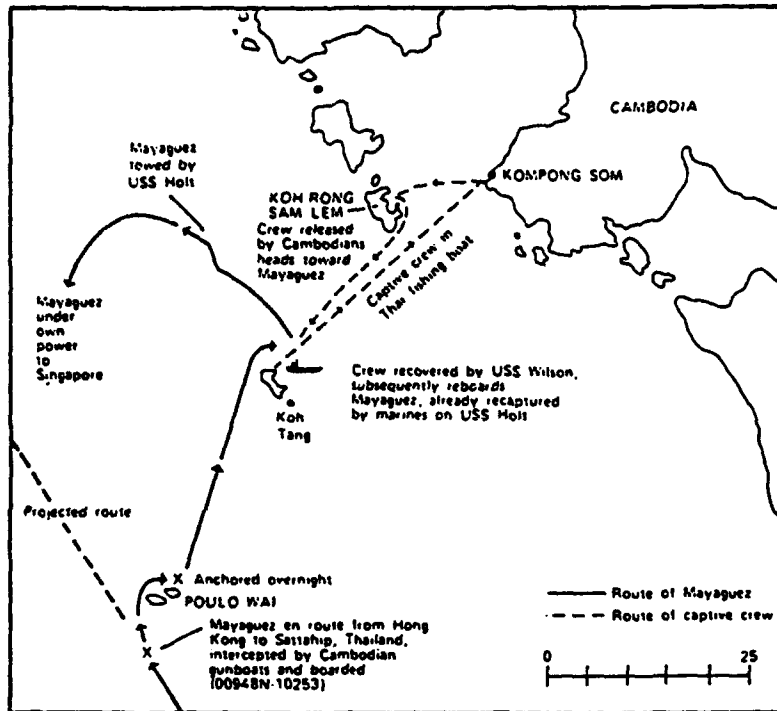
### Standing Orders, Rogers' Rangers

(Major Robert Rogers, 1759)

1. Don't forget nothing.
2. Have your musket clean as a whistle, hatchet scoured, sixty rounds powder and ball, and be ready to march at a minute's warning.
3. When you're on the march, act the way you would if you was sneaking up on a deer. See the enemy first.
4. Tell the truth about what you see and what you do. There is an army depending on us for correct information. You can lie all you please when you tell other folks about the Rangers, but don't never lie to a Ranger or officer.
5. Don't never take a chance you don't have to.
6. When we're on the march we march single file, far enough apart so one shot can't go through two men.
7. If we strike swamps, or soft ground, we spread out abreast, so it's hard to track us.
8. When we march, we keep moving till dark, so as to give the enemy the least possible chance at us.
9. When we camp, half the party stays awake while the other half sleeps.
10. If we take prisoners, we keep 'em separate till we have had time to examine them, so they can't cook up a story between 'em.
11. Don't ever march home the same way. Take a different route so you won't be ambushed.
12. No matter whether we travel in big parties or little ones, each party has to keep a scout 20 yards ahead, twenty yards on each flank and twenty yards in the rear, so the main body can't be surprised and wiped out.
13. Every night you'll be told where to meet if surrounded by a superior force.
14. Don't sit down to eat without posting sentries.
15. Don't sleep beyond dawn. Dawn's when the French and Indians attack.
16. Don't cross a river by a regular ford.
17. If somebody's trailing you, make a circle, come back onto your own tracks, and ambush the folks that aim to ambush you.
18. Don't stand up when the enemy's coming against you. Kneel down. Hide behind a tree.
19. Let the enemy come till he's almost close enough to touch. Then let him have it and jump out and finish him up with your hatchet.

## APPENDIX B

FIGURE 6  
LOCATION OF MAYAGUEZ AND CREW  
May 12-15, 1975



\*Seizure of the Mayaguez Part IV. Reports of the Comptroller General of the United States submitted to the Subcommittee on International Political and Military Affairs, Committee on International Relations, October 4, 1976.

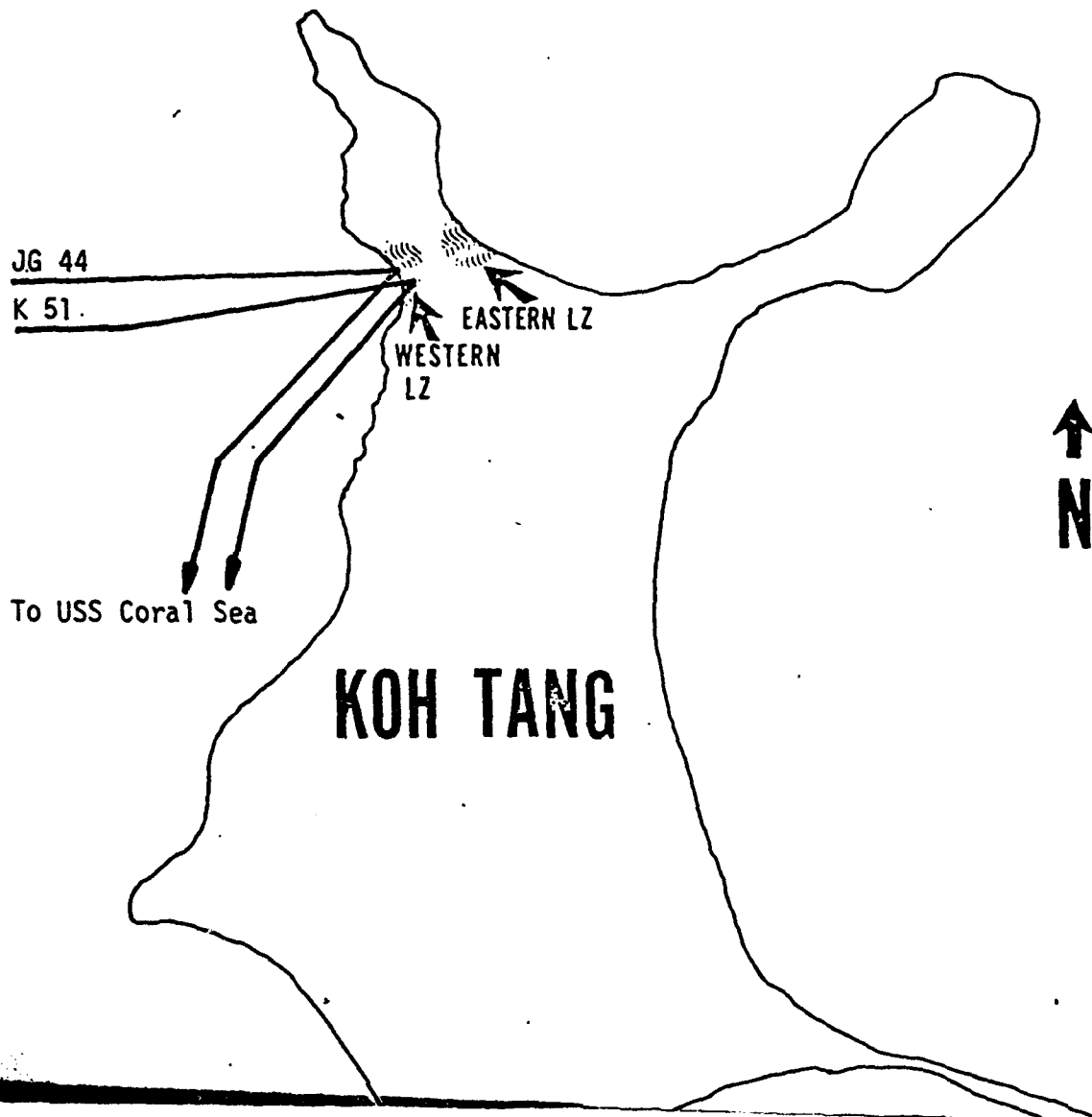
## APPENDIX C

FIGURE 12

MARINES EXTRACTED BY WAVE III - (69, Western LZ)

JG 44 - Extracts 40. RTB USS Coral Sea. No battle damage.

K 51 - Extracts 29. RTB USS Coral Sea. No battle damage.



## "NOTES"

- <sup>1</sup> John R. Cuneo, Robert Rogers of the Rangers, (Ny, Oxford University Press 1959), pg. 106.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., pg. 154
- <sup>3</sup> In fact, a hollywood movie starring Spencer Tracy immortalized the event.
- <sup>4</sup> Robert Rogers, Journals of Major Robert Rogers, (Ann Arbor Mi., Univ Microfilms, 1765), pg. VII.
- <sup>5</sup> In light of the pullout of American forces after the loss of 17 Rangers in Somalia, it is important to note the difference -- with the population numbers being what they were in the colonies, the loss of 1 man would be like losing 300 today.
- <sup>6</sup> Rogers, Intro
- <sup>7</sup> Cuneo, pg. 50
- <sup>8</sup> Adm. Sandy Woodward, One Hundred Days: The Falklands Battle Group Story, (Annapolis, Md., Naval Institute Press, 1992) pg. 200
- <sup>9</sup> Cuneo, pg. 84
- <sup>10</sup> Urey W. Patrick, The Mayaguez Operation, (Alexandria, Va, Center for Naval Analyses, Apr 77), pg 1
- <sup>11</sup> The staging base for the assault on KT and the headquarters of the COMUSSAG/7AF who exercised tactical control of all AF aircraft
- <sup>12</sup> In this process, one CH-53 with the inextremis force of 22 USAF security policemen would crash in Thailand (due to mechanical problems) killing all 29 airmen on board.
- <sup>13</sup> These aircraft would eventually combine for a total of 260 sorties from 13-15 May (including the dropping of a 15,000lb BLU-82 "daisy cutter" from a C-130. Patrick, pg. 82
- <sup>14</sup> Richard Head, Frisco Short & Robert MacFarlane, Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the Mayaguez and Korean Confrontation, (Boulder, Co., Westview Press, 1978) pg. 101
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., pg., 107
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., pg. 108
- <sup>17</sup> Robert Rowan, The Four Days of the Mayaguez, (NY, WW Norton, 1975), pg. 141
- <sup>18</sup> Though the original plan was to have the helo's assault the Mayaguez directly
- <sup>19</sup> Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 238
- <sup>20</sup> What wasn't known, was that the captain of the *Mayaguez* had faked an engine problem and the ship had steamed under half speed. the crew had also been moved during the transit to a Cambodian craft and deposited on the mainland. Intell could never fix the position of the crew until the interception of the thai fishing boat they

---

had been released to, at 0700 on the morning the assault began, by the USS Holt at 1005.

- 21 Interview with Col Gary Weikel, Director of Forces and Resources, ASD/SOLIC, Pentagon, USAF co-pilot and silver star recipient from the Mayaguez: 17 Jan.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 119
- 24 Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 238
- 25 The Mayaguez force included 2 AF explosives experts, 6 Military Sealift Command personnel and 1 Army linguist, while the Koh Tang Island force included 3 Army linguists, 10 Navy corpsmen and 1 Navy doctor.
- 26 An often overlooked and under appreciated part of the Mayaguez operation was the flexibility offered by the air refuelable HH-53. After everyone's first pass in many of the fuel tanks were inoperable due to large holes from severe battle damage. That literally put the CH's on the bench. Without the ability to continue to cycle back to the tanker, we'd have never been able to rescue those Marines and the whole operation would have been a disaster - Weikel Interview
- 27 Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 140
- 28 USAF Pacific Air Forces, The Assault on Koh Tang Island, (Hickam AFB, Ha., 1977), pg. 26
- 29 Patrick, pg. 82
- 30 With the exception of the AC-130 and an OV-10, all the TACAIR was judged to be totally ineffective, Weikel interview.
- 31 Probably a good decision in light of the lack of training and skill in this tactic by either the Marine rifle company or the AF helo's
- 32 Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 238
- 33 Weikel interview
- 34 Woodward, pg. 110
- 35 The Navy report faults the lack of USAF use of amphib assault tactics even though they call for LZ preparation. The PACAF report lauds the USAF helo crews as does the JCS report. The Spec ops CH-53s were almost exact duplicates of the USMC assault platform. They had no air refueling capability or crash worthy fuel tanks. As a result all but one were knocked out of action in the first hour and an half.
- 36 Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 123
- 37 Ibid. pg. 120
- 38 The Navy report (Patrick's) blames among other things the Air Force helos' for not properly using amphibious assault tactics which actually revolve around preparation of the LZ by naval gunfire and tacair, which of course couldn't be accomplished without the knowing the whereabouts of the crew for starters.
- 39 Rick Atkinson, Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War, (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1993) pg. 142
- 40 Woodward, pg. 195

- 
- 41 David C. Martin & John Walcott, Best Laid Plans, (Cambridge, Harper and Row), 1988 pg. 174
- 42 Arthur T. Hadley, The Straw Giant: Triumph and Failure of America's Armed Forces, (Ny, Random House, 1986), pg. 5
- 43 Head, Short and MacFarlane, pg. 249
- 44 Ibid. pg. 239
- 45 Ibid. pg. 248
- 46 PACAF, pg. 38
- 47 Thomas Friedman, "Investigator Pries Open Cold War Secrets", NY Times, 25 Jan 94, p. 1
- 48 Martin & Walcott, pg. 235
- 49 Ulad Jenkins, The Achille Lauro Hijacking, Cambridge, Ma. Harvard: Kennedy School of Govt, 1988 pg. 2
- 50 Ibid. pg. 2
- 51 Where a group of terrorists seized a TWA jet with pistols and hand grenades, forcing it to fly between Tunis and Beirut, with the objective of obtaining the release of terrorist compatriots from Israel and Kuwait.
- 52 Martin & Walcott pg. 239
- 53 Ibid. pg. 193
- 54 Ibid. pg. 175
- 55 Jenkins, pg. 3
- 56 During Grenada, the JSOC helo's were late departing Barbados because it took 3 times longer unloading the aircraft than planned., Martin page 174
- 57 Martin, pg. 237
- 58 Ibid. pg. 235
- 59 When trying to decide whether they could pare down their team to fit on the available helo's, Logan Fitch the Delta Force team leader said, "Who would I leave behind", Martin page, 22
- 60 Ibid. pg. 174
- 61 Ibid. pg. 179
- 62 Having been unknowingly intercepted by Saratoga aircrews while enroute from Akotiri as they were searching for the terrorists
- 63 Martin pg. 175
- 64 Ibid. pg. 173

---

<sup>65</sup> Neil C. Livingstone, The Cult of Counter-terrorism, ( Lexington, Ma.,Lexington Books, 1990), pg. 305

<sup>66</sup> Yeshayahu Ben-Porat, Entebbe Rescue, (NY, Delacourte Press, 1976), pg. 162

<sup>67</sup> Air refuelable helos may have allowed the flexibility to conduct operations on Tues night rather than waiting for the positioning of the ships. Certainly the use of air refueable helos would have prevented the desert one debacle.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Atkinson, Rick. Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1993
- Avery, James A. The Sky Pirates. NY, NY: Scribner & Sons, 1972
- Ben-Porat, Yeshayahu Entebbe Rescue. NY, NY: Delacourte Press, 1976
- Cassese, Antonio. Terrorism, Politics and Law : "The Achille Lauro Affair". Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press, 1989
- Cuneo, John R. Robert Rogers of the Rangers. NY, NY: Oxford University Press 1959.
- Dobson, Christopher & Payne, Ronald. The Never Ending War, Terrorism in the 80's. NY, NY: Facts on File Publications, 1987
- Friedman, Thomas. "Investigator Pries Open Cold War Secrets": NY Times: 25 Jan 1994
- Hadley, Arthur T. The Straw Giant: Triumph and Failure of America's Armed Forces NY, NY: Random House, 1986
- Head, Richard and Short, Frisco & Robert MacFarlane. Crisis Resolution: Presidential Decision Making in the Mayaguez and Korean Confrontation. Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1978
- Jenkins, Ulad. The Achille Lauro Hijacking. Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University, Kennedy School of Govt, 1988
- Kyle, James H. The Guts to Try: The Untold Story of the Iran Hostage Rescue Mission. NY, NY: Orion Books, 1990.
- Livingstone, Neil C. The Cult of Counter-terrorism. Lexington, Ma: Lexington Books, 1990
- Martin, David C. & Walcott, John. Best Laid Plans Cambridge, Ma: Harper and Row, 1988
- Patrick, Urey W. The Mayaguez Operation, Alexandria, Va: Center for Naval Analyses, 1977
- Rogers, Robert. Journals of Major Robert Rogers. Ann Arbor Mi: Univ Microfilms Reprint of 1st ed. 1765
- Rowan, Robert. The Four Days of the Mayaguez, NY, NY: WW Norton, 1975



Stevenson, William. 90 Minutes at Entebbe. NY,NY: Bantam Books, July 1976

Taylor, William J. & Maaranen, Steven A. The Future of Conflicts in the 1980's. Lexington, Ma: Lexington Books, 1981

USAF Pacific Air Forces. The Assault on Koh Tang Island: Hickam AFB, Ha., 1977

Weikel, Gary Col. Interview with Director of Forces and Resources, ASD/SOLIC, Pentagon: USAF co-pilot and Silver Star recipient from the Mayaguez: 17 Jan 1994

Woodward, Sandy Adm. One Hundred Days: The Falklands Battle Group Story. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1992